



THE NORWEGIAN EXPLORERS  
OF MINNESOTA, INC.



# EXPLORATIONS

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"You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson,  
but I am sure that it never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend."

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## Editor's Desk

**L**AST August my wife, Karen, and I took our annual vacation. While ostensibly a non-Sherlockian trip, it is hard for me to entirely separate myself from my Sherlockian pursuits.

Our vacation was to Wyoming and on the drive out from Minnesota, we listened to some old radio plays, with Sir John Gielgud as Sherlock Holmes and Sir Ralph Richardson as Dr. Watson. As reading material I took along Mattias Boström's incredible work, *From Holmes to Sherlock* that was reviewed by Gary Thaden in the last issue of *Explorations*. The book contains many references to Explorers and Minnesota. Mattias either referenced, quoted or mentioned Explorers Julie McKuras, Andrew Malec, Tim Johnson, John Bergquist and Jon Lellenberg, and likely a few others whom I've missed. He also prominently mentions the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the Elmer L. Andersen Library and the dedication of the Shaw collection.

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## A Word from the President

BY TOM GOTTWALT



It is an honor to pen my first "President's Word" column. A big "Thank You" goes to Gary Thaden for leading us as president for the past eleven years. Another "Thank You" goes to

Phil Bergem for agreeing to serve as Vice President in addition to his editorial work on this publication and others. Other Board Members include Secretary/Treasurer Mike Eckman, John Bergquist, Bob Brusic, Lindsay Hall (our newest Board Member), Tim Johnson, Tim Reich, Ray Riethmeier, Dick Sveum, and past presidents Gary Thaden, Julie McKuras, Bruce Southworth, Pj Doyle, and Paul Martin. We held a board meeting in February

As I noted at our December Annual Dinner, our organization is doing well and we are busy. At nearly 150 members, we are the largest non-national scion society in the world. Our finances are solid. Our Study Group, led by Kristy Iverson, Mary Loving, Steve Miller, and Steve Schier, meets regularly as it works its way through the Canon. Our members are contributing to published Sherlockian works at an amazing pace. The Red Throated League, under Bob Brusic's leadership, continues its production of Edith Meiser radio scripts with its next performance April 15 at the Pavek Museum of Broadcasting.

Our website, under John Bergquist's care, is active with members using the convenience of PayPal to pay their dues and other fees. We are active on social media as well, thanks to the efforts of Mary Loving. We held our "Baker Street West" January gathering at Cooper's Pub and are planning our other regular meetings including a fall members' meeting and our December Annual

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## *Sherlockian Game Night: “Features of Interest” Indeed!*

BY STEVEN SCHIER



GOOD time was had by all eight investigators participating in the first annual Sherlockian Game night on August 25, 2017. Organized into three detection teams, each group of sleuths attempted to solve a case from the classic Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective game.

The game, originally published by Sleuth publications in 1983, was republished in the 1990s and again in 2011. A new version of the game with fresh cases again appeared in 2016.

Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective presents a detection team with a brief opening case narrative, a London directory of individuals and institutions, a London city map, copies of relevant London newspapers and a clue book containing interviews with possible witnesses. It's a challenging and stimulating game that requires detectives to sort through several types of evidence to arrive at a solution. When a team believes it has solved the case, it must answer some quiz questions correctly and then compare its solution with that of Holmes himself.

My detection group included the estimable John Bergquist BSI and the intrepid Kristi Iverson. We settled on the “Case of the Mummy’s Curse” in part because John informed us that the classic 1931 horror film *The Mummy* starring Boris Karloff was based on two Conan Doyle stories. The case initially involved three murders, all involving strangulation with 4000-year-old Egyptian linen. The murders occurred during a dig of a tomb in Egypt, on a ship carrying the mummy back to England and in the London Museum where the mummy was to be put on display. The three main explorers in the expedition were the victims. Along the way, we discovered a fourth murder among the boat passengers.

Once we solved the four murders, we discovered that our path to solution was entirely separate from that of Holmes. We encountered none of Holmes’s evidence yet solved the case — a tribute to the impressive complexity of the game. Our separate path hinged on the fact that the murderer had two motives for the killing. We found one of the motives and Holmes

the other. We also found a key piece of physical evidence that solved the case for us, evidence that Holmes never found.

Two other groups worked on the “Case of the Banker’s Quietus,” a complex case involving theft, murder and the pursuit of several Venus de Milo statues à la “The Six Napoleons.” Both groups solved the central mystery, yet one discovered an additional murder while the other group did not.

The night concluded with a spirited discussion of the solutions we encountered and a comparison of the various sources of evidence we employed. The evening’s detectives included Mike and Julie McKuras, Tom Gottwald, Inez and John Bergquist, Krtisti Iverson and Steve and Mary Schier. All agreed that Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective is a fine game and is well worth your time. You can find new and use copies of the various editions for sale on eBay and Amazon. Game night will now become an annual event. Stay tuned for news of the next occurrence. 🐾

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## *Explorers Gathering in October*



TWENTY-ONE Explorers got together at the Andersen Library on Monday, October 23, 2017. The intent was to hear Bonnie MacBird talk about her new book, *Unquiet Spirits*, a sequel to her acclaimed *Art in the Blood*. Unfortunately, Bonnie was ill and not able to make it to the Twin Cities. As disappointed as the group was, we were still treated to a wonderful evening due to several Explorers, starting with Julie McKuras and Dick Sveum, who came to the rescue in their typically amazing way. The two had attended Sherlockian gatherings in Meiringen, Switzerland, and in Florence, Italy, at the end of August and in early to mid-September and related their experiences.

Julie spoke of the Switzerland leg of the trip, the conference hosted by The Reichenbach Irregulars of Switzerland, “Reichenbach and Beyond, *The Final Problem* Revisited.” They stayed at Das Hotel Panorama in Meiringen, with a wonderful view of the Reichenbach Falls across the valley, although as we saw from her photos, it was not visible for the first two days due to heavy fog. In spite of the fog (it eventually cleared up) and several glitches, the international group of participants had a wonderful time visiting Sherlockian-

related sites in the town, getting up-close-and-personal with the Reichenbach Falls, attending presentations and other events.

Dick spoke about the Italian leg of the trip hosted by Uno Studio in Holmes (The Sherlock Holmes Society of Italy) which was held a week later in Florence with more spectacular sightseeing and presentations. Many of these were held in literally palatial surroundings (the Palazzo Bastogi, the Palazzo del Pegaso and the Palazzo Medici Riccardi; palazzo being Italian for “palace”). For those interested in additional details, Dick and Julie both wrote of their experiences for the Winter 2017 edition of *The Baker Street Journal*.

The intrepid two then both spoke of The Hounds of the Baskerville (sic) dinner in Chicago, held on October 6th. The group celebrated its 75th anniversary this past January and, in preparation for it, the current Master of the Hounds, Don Terras, updated a history of the group that had been written by John Nieminski in 1983. The new book consists of the 1983 text and images, and Don wrote a historical account of the group for the ensuing 34 years to bring it up to date. The *Explorations* editor, Phil Bergem, assisted with the book by helping with editing and completing the layout. The book is available from Don Terras (\$40.00 postpaid, 2535 Sheridan Rd., Evanston, IL 60201). Julie and Dick also mentioned that Phil was made a member of the Hounds at the dinner.

The two also attended Bouchercon in Toronto and spoke of their participation at that event as well. While in Toronto, Dick visited the Toronto Reference Library and the ACD Collection. At the time there was an exhibition at the library titled “Pop Sherlock,” which documents Sherlock Holmes’s iconic role through displays of a wide variety of items.

Following their presentation Tim Johnson talked about modifications being made at the Andersen Library. On the cavern level they are installing compact shelving for rare books being moved over from Wilson Library, and new classroom and exhibit space. In addition, the 221B study, donated by Allen Mackler, is also being moved from a conference room in Wilson Library to a permanent display space in Andersen.

Tom Gottwalt mentioned other recent and upcoming events. Snacks and refreshments were

provided by the Library system and were very appreciated by the attendees.

At the end of the evening Julie organized a group photo, with a sign stating “Get Well Bonnie” and sent it to her with the group’s best wishes. 🐾



## The 2017 Explorers’ Annual Dinner



HE Norwegian Explorers’ Annual Dinner was held, as normal, at the Minneapolis Golf Club on, as normal, the first Thursday of December (the 7th, this year) with, as normal, a British themed buffet of fish & chips, shepherd’s pie, salad, Yorkshire pudding and trifle. And, as normal, a fun time was had by all. For the first half hour the group spent gathering with drinks and engaging in conversation before settling in at the assembled tables. Each place setting had the evening’s program, a copy of the Christmas Annual, the illustration for the captions contest and some Canonical Christmas carols. The program was once again compiled and produced by Julie McKuras with amusingly appropriate descriptive quotes from “His Last Bow.” (The story was chosen to mark the 100th anniversary of its publication.) The theme of this year’s Christmas Annual was “Fame and Fortune in the Canon.” The carols and the limericks contest were developed by Bob Brusic, with the caption’s theme also being “His Last Bow.”

An invocation was provided by Reverend Brusic and folks were invited to get their food from the buffet. Following dinner there were Canonical toasts. These were presented by Tim Reich (Mrs. Hudson), Larry Czarnecki (Mycroft), Phil Bergem (The Second Mrs. Watson), Monica Schmidt (The game is afoot!), Art Hogenson (The second most dangerous man in London) and Garry Peterson (The Woman). Tying in with another hobby of his, Tim offered a brilliant list of actual micro-brew beer names with Canonical connections, finishing up with one related to Mrs. Hudson. Stimulated by last year’s musical toast, Garry



Photo: Gary Thaden



amazed us all by singing his toast while playing the banjo, to the great amusement of the audience.

Following the toasts was the business meeting. Mike Eckman presented the financial report. He, Gary and Tom presented a check for \$2,221 to Tim Johnson and Cheryl Fong from the Norwegian Explorers for support of the



Sherlock Holmes Collections. Following that there was the election of new Board officers. (Julie's chosen quote on the program was "The whole proceeding is absolutely illegal and outrageous.") Then Gary, stepping aside after being group president since December 2006, gave an outgoing address which is reproduced elsewhere in this issue.

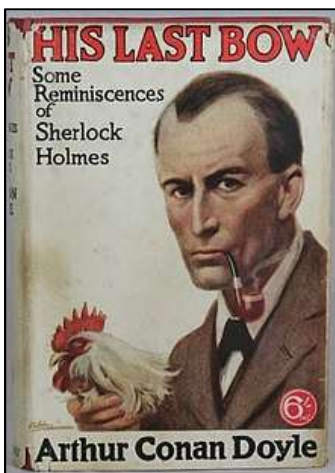
Another annual tradition is the Sigerson Awards for articles in the *Annual*. The titles of these were thought of by the ever-imaginative Julie, again all taken from LAST: Richard M. Caplan – For "Fame and Fortune in the Canon" – The "Gem of My Collection" Award; Julie McKuras – For "The Lady of the Graveyard" – The "You Have Everything Ready to Leave" Award; Michael Eckman – For "Would That Be a Fortune Today?" – The "What is it Worth" Award; Michael Eckman – For "Secrets of Great Fortunes" – The "Paymaster was Such a Rascal" Award; Ruth Berman – For "Holmes and the Illustrious Clients" – The "English King" Award; Robert Brusic – For "Two Pair Beats All Other Hands," – The "American Stunt" Award; Robert

Brusic – For "Christmas Pie on Baker Street" – The "Bringing Home the Bacon" Award; Melissa Aho – For "The Case of the Sherlock Holmes Sudoku Puzzle" – The "It's Enough to Make a Man Bughouse" Award; Steve Schier – For "The Paradoxes of Fame and Fortune in 'The Bruce-Partington Plans'" – The "Greedy Rogue" Award; Art Hogenon – For "Fame and Fortune" – The "Precious Contents" Award; George A. Vanderburgh – For "In Re: Sherlockian Limerickers" – The "Your Great Coup" Award; John Clemo – For "Holmes at Twilight" – The "Life of a Hermit" Award; Soren Eversoll – For "The Hunt for the Agra Treasure" – The "Boodle" Award; Larry Czarnecki – For "Mr. Holmes, Help!" – The "Pleasant Old Lady Had Appeared in the Doorway" Award; Amanda Downs – For her cover illustrations – The "Those Talents Had Become More and More Manifest" Award.

After the amusement of the awards we had a somber moment. Gary spoke of Kathy Moran, who had passed away at the end of 2016, with a "Stand with Me Here Upon the Terrace" remembrance. The mood lightened again when Julie McKuras, Tim Johnson and Steve Schier gave the after-dinner presentation, each centered on "His Last Bow." Julie posed the question "Who was Martha?" She presented a well-reasoned argument that it was Watson's second wife, Irene Adler. Tim talked eloquently of the spy and espionage elements in the story, with ties to the origins of MI5 and MI6. Steve finished up the presentation with his own question of "Who wrote 'His

Last Bow'?" In providing four possibilities he cast amusingly slanderous aspersions on four stalwart Explorers in the audience. Following the presentations, the three received a well-deserved round of applause.

Next came the limericks and captions contest, another tradition organized by Bob Brusic, which were to be based on a British cover of LAST. Some of the limericks that members came up with are:



There once was a man with a hen  
 Whose best friend took up with the pen  
     To write about plots  
     We read them, lots  
 And discuss them at length among friends.  
 (Tom Gottwalt)

An adventure to make your pulse quicken  
 Or a limerick to make us all sicken  
     But Bob's not your uncle  
     It's not a carbuncle  
 That Holmes will squeeze out of that chicken.  
 (Ray Riethmeier)

German agent von Bork liked to crow  
 "English intelligence is so-so"  
     Altamont, no spring chicken  
     Saw von Bork get a lickin'  
 And 'gainst violence he set his last bow.  
 (Karen Ellery)

Holmes looks out at us with a scowl  
 Causing von Bork to throw in the towel  
     And so I shall tweet  
     Reminiscence so sweet ...  
 Though the rooster is really quite fowl!  
 (Unknown author)

After the group sang some repurposed Christmas carols, Tom closed out the evening by reading "When I spend a long evening with Holmes," and friends departed into the night.

### **Selection of Dinner Toasts**

#### "Mycroft" by Larry Czarnecki

Mycroft Holmes, elder brother of Sherlock by seven years. A government accountant and inter-departmental advisor. As Sherlock tells it, "Mycroft draws £450 a year, remains a subordinate, has no ambitions of any kind, will receive neither honor nor title."

He lives along Pall Mall and walks around the corner into Whitehall in the morning and back in the evening, from year's end to year's end, and takes no other exercise. A founding member of the Diogenes Club, a club that contains the most unsociable and unclubbable men in town, according to Sherlock. However, his powers of deduction and observation are great, as when Sherlock needed him in "The

Greek Interpreter" and "The Bruce-Partington Plans."

I believe that Sherlock was in contact with Mycroft during the Great Hiatus after Reichenbach, and Mycroft was in contact with Mrs. Hudson, who kept the confidence of Mycroft. How else to explain her keeping 221B in good shape?

So, raise a glass to Mycroft Holmes, who on occasion *was* the British government!

#### "The second most dangerous man in London" by Art Hogenson

I rise to toast a gentleman-villain, if that is not an oxymoron. He was born in London in 1840, educated at Eton and Oxford, where we can only assume that he skipped any classes on religion. He first came on the scene in "The Adventure of the Empty House," and was still around in 1902 where he is mentioned in "The Illustrious Client."

A devoted sportsman, and skilled card player who also cheated, even committing murder to cover up his cheating. He served as the right-hand man to the Napoleon of Crime, for which he was paid a handsome stipend of \$30,000 a year, and in this position of seeing the Professor Moriarty's dastardly deeds were carried out caused him to especially hate our hero, whom he tried to kill. So, ladies and gentlemen, raise your glasses, but perhaps not too high, as I give you Colonel John Sebastian "Tiger Jack" Moran.

#### "The Second Mrs. Watson" by Phil Bergem

The Sherlock Holmes stories aren't, for the most part, mysteries. They are well-told tales of Adventures, or recollections from a Memoir or a Case-book, or some other account that holds our interest and has us return time after time. In fact, the only one of the sixty stories from the Canon with the word "mystery" in the title is "The Boscombe Valley Mystery."

There are, however, mysteries within the stories. Such as what happened in the various cases mentioned, but never elaborated upon. "The remarkable worm unknown to science," for instance. Or, what exactly it is that Mycroft Holmes does for the British Government. Perhaps the most puzzling mystery is: How many wives did Dr. Watson have?

Here is a mystery for which much has been written and argued about. There is no direct evidence of a second wife. We, as amateur reasoners ourselves, have to deduce her existence from statements written by John Watson himself. It takes putting the cases into chronological order in order to even determine that there must have been a second wife, or perhaps more. We don't know if she was Mary Morstan, or someone named Violet, or someone we have no knowledge of at all. Whoever she was, she deserves recognition for her relationship to our beloved Watson. So, please raise your glass to a woman of mystery, the stalwart companion of a stalwart companion, to "The Second Mrs. Watson." 🍷

### Gary Thaden's Outgoing Speech from the Annual Dinner

**D**ECEMBER 2006 to December 2017. It has been a quick 11 years as President of the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota.

We have held four international conferences:

- 2007: Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas
- 2010: The Spirits of Sherlock Holmes
- 2013: Sherlock Holmes Through Time and Place
- 2016: The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes

We have embraced and weathered three waves of popular Sherlockiana:

- The Robert Downey, Jr. movies starting in 2009
- The BBC *Sherlock* series starting in 2010
- CBS's *Elementary* starting in 2012.

Within the Explorers, we have more fully utilized the web site (adding the option of paying for membership and this annual dinner through the use of PayPal), added a Facebook page and reached out to new Sherlockians with Twitter.

We have continued the tradition of the Master's birthday celebration in January of each year with our Baker Street West. The Red-Throated League has re-enacted an Edith Meiser play every spring. We have held eclectic

fall meetings and this annual holiday party in December is still popular.

In February 2009, Great Britain had a countrywide celebration of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*. A few months later, the Study Group participated in that celebration by examining the book and the movie. The next year, in June 2010 (and every June thereafter) the Study Group expanded its scope to include other works written by or inspired by the literary agent. This is in addition to, from September through May, working its way through the 60 Sherlock Holmes stories.

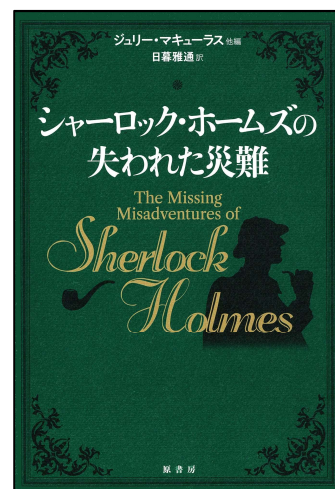
At our December annual meetings, we have had speakers as varied as authors, museum exhibitors, and Explorers. Members have spread the word about Sherlock Holmes throughout the Midwest at elementary schools, libraries, literary societies and colleges. And we continue to publish "Explorations" and various books and pamphlets in conjunction with our conferences. Our most recent conference publication, *The Missing Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*, will soon be published in Japanese.

As to outings, we have attended Sherlockian plays at the Park Square Theater (St. Paul), the University Showboat (Mississippi River), the Rochester Civic Theater, and Main Street Stage (Anoka).

Our members have participated in Birthday festivities in New York and London, have spoken at a Sherlockian statute unveiling in London, ridden on Sherlockian cruises in the Baltic Sea, and dressed in Victorian regalia on trips to Switzerland.

On the whole, it has been an exciting, fun-filled 11 years. I have enjoyed serving as your President. It has been an honor and a privilege. I now start a new chapter in service to the Sherlockian world — as President of the University of Minnesota's Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections.

It would be remiss of me if I did not single out three people for particular thanks. Dick



Sveum, in whose shoes I have stepped as President of the Friends. Julie McKuras, who hoodwinked me into serving as your President. And to one who could not be in attendance tonight, my wife Andy. To paraphrase my favorite author: "I shall ever regard her as the best and the wisest person whom I have ever known."

We now have a new President: Tom Gottwalt. Tom is much like Baron von Herling from *His Last Bow*: "Hard-drinking, night-club, knock about town devil may care young fellow."

With such leadership, the Norwegian Explorers are primed and ready to help the world explore that great detective, Mr. Sherlock Holmes! Thank you.

– Gary Thaden, President, 2007–2017

## The Very Rocks Have Ears

BY KAREN MURDOCK



PERSONIFICATION (also known as prosopopoeia) is a figure of speech in which inanimate objects, non-human beings, ideas, or abstractions are endowed with human qualities or abilities.

*You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace;  
the mountains and hills will burst into song before you,  
and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. (Isaiah 55:12)*

Since mountains cannot really sing and trees do not really have hands, this is an example of personification.

This figure is common in poetry

*This mad sea shows its teeth tonight.  
He curls his lip, he lies in wait  
With lifted teeth as if to bite!*  
(Joaquin Miller, "Columbus")

in painting, and in certain somewhat overwrought forms of public speech

*And though the murderers may escape the just  
resentment of an enraged people, though  
drowsy justice, intoxicated by the poisonous  
draught prepared for her cup, still nods upon her  
rotten seat, yet be assured, such complicated  
crimes will meet their due reward.*

*(John Hancock, speech on the fourth anniversary of The Boston Massacre, March 5, 1774)*

This trope is familiar to most readers. Even such common expressions as "raging storm," "cruel disease," "pitiless desert," and "courageous lion" are personifications, though worn smooth with long use. It is, however, very rarely to be found in the Sherlockian Canon.

Personification is used once in the first Sherlock Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*. As Jefferson Hope arrives at the fringe of Salt Lake City after the death of John Ferrier and the abduction of Lucy, he encounters "a mounted man riding towards him. As he approached, he recognized him as a Mormon named Cowper, to whom he had rendered services at different times." Hope accosts the man and asks him what has become of Lucy. Cowper is astonished then concerned. He tells Hope there is a warrant out for his arrest, issued by "the Holy Four."

*"I don't fear them, or their warrant," Hope said, earnestly. "You must know something of this matter, Cowper. I conjure you by everything you hold dear to answer a few questions. We have always been friends. For God's sake, don't refuse to answer me."*

*"What is it?" the Mormon asked, uneasily. "Be quick. The very rocks have ears and the trees eyes."*

This example of personification stands out for its rarity. Of the 35 different figures of speech I have found in the Canon, personification is one of the rarest (along with such equally obscure figures as aposiopesis, asyndeton, hyperbole, hendiadys, and zeugma).

Houses sometimes bring out Watson's usually hidden tendency to personify inanimate objects. Of the house of Culverton Smith in DYIN, Watson writes that it "had an air of smug and demure respectability in its old-fashioned iron railings, its massive folding-door, and its shining brasswork." Lestrade summons Holmes to 131 Pitt Street, "a quiet little backwater just beside one of the briskest currents of London life," where a murder has been committed in "The Six Napoleons." When Holmes and Watson arrive on the scene, Watson observes that "No. 131 was one of a row, all flat-chested, respectable,

and most unromantic dwellings,” an example of personification. Two other houses also are personified in Watson’s view of them:

*... the scene of the crime — high, dingy, narrow-chested house, prim, formal, and solid, like the century which gave it birth. (SECO, 659)*

*... a very long street of two-story brick houses, neat and prim. (CARD, 891)*

“The Hound of the Baskervilles” contains several examples of personification. The landscape and weather of Dartmoor are portrayed so vividly that the moor almost seems like a character in this novel.

*Beyond, two copses of trees moaned.*


*... the fog-wreaths came crawling round both corners of the house.*

*Its [the Grimpen Mire’s] tenacious grip plucked at our heels as we walked, and when we sank into it it was as if some malignant hand was tugging us down.*

#### QUIZ ON PERSONIFICATION IN THE CANON

This is a very short quiz. Most of the few examples of personification I found in the Canon are mentioned above. Here are five more examples. In which tales do they occur?

1. The wind howled and screamed at the windows.
2. More than once my revolver had been a good friend in need
3. The smoke bubbled merrily through the rose-water
4. Those great elemental forces which shriek at mankind
5. Half a moon peeping occasionally through the rifts

Choose your answers from: FIVE, GOLD, SIGN (2 examples), THOR. (Answers on page 10.) 

## The Adventure of the First-timer at a BSI Weekend

BY RAY RIETHMEIER



VE spent more than two-thirds of my life as a fan of Sherlock Holmes in print, film and radio, and roughly half of that time I have been active in the Norwegian Explorers. I can’t pinpoint with certainty when I became aware of the Baker Street Irregulars, but it wasn’t long after I discovered the organization exists that I started thinking about how to make it to New York City for their annual gathering. Much of that time I ended up dismissing the notion, considering myself “unworthy” of such august company.<sup>1</sup>

I can assure anyone reading this who has harbored similar thoughts that they are entirely misplaced.

I had heard much about the BSI weekend from fellow Norwegian Explorers who had been attending for years, and many of them had encouraged me to make the trip myself. I finally decided that 2018 was going to be my year. Talking with Phil Bergem and Tim Reich, it seemed less daunting to make plans knowing that there would be people I knew well there. In fact, my wife Becky and I made travel plans with Tim and his wife, Sara, so that we would fly out and back together.

The deadlines caught us a little off-guard, as we hadn’t made the final decision to go until late November. By the time we had started to make our plans, it was already December 1 (Friday), and we discovered that many of the reservations for the BSI weekend events had to be made by December 4 (Monday). Tim and I filled out our registration documents in a mad rush and we had them sent with confirmed delivery for timely receipt on Monday.

Having overcome that little logistical misadventure, the rest seemed easy!<sup>2</sup>

Although the first scheduled event of the BSI weekend is on Wednesday evening,<sup>3</sup> the Reichs and the Riethmeiers flew into NYC on Thursday morning, January 11. My first-ever

<sup>1</sup> For clarification, the BSI might better be described as “January” company.

<sup>2</sup> Let our experience be an object lesson to others planning to attend in the coming years: Watch the deadlines carefully!

<sup>3</sup> “ASH Wednesday,” an informal dinner hosted by *The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes*.



BSI weekend event, therefore, was the BSI Distinguished Speaker Lecture held at the Yale Club, featuring an engaging presentation by multiple-award-winning author, Martin Edwards. The venue was quite nice, and it was packed with fellow Sherlockians, some I knew from Minnesota, some I knew by reputation, and most of whom I was encountering for the first time. I was struck by how friendly everyone seemed, and I found it remarkably easy to strike up conversations with people who have a shared interest! I recall gearing myself up to ask a question at the end of the lecture, but I was preempted when someone else asked the same thing ahead of me. Undaunted, I left the lecture feeling pleased with the experience, and among the notables we spotted on our way out was author Laurie R. King, who was kind enough to chat with me and my wife for a few minutes before we departed.

Part of the fun of BSI weekend is how much New York City has to offer visitors. The Reichs and the Riethmeiers each were determined to find time to take in various sights during our trip, and that fun started on Thursday evening. The Reichs were in a “New York state of mind,” so they went to a Billy Joel concert that night,<sup>4</sup> while I put my “love in jeopardy” by going to a Greg Kihn Band concert by myself.<sup>5</sup> We therefore missed the “Daintiest Scream On The Moor” charity ball presented by the Baker Street Babes that evening, which included a costume competition, a Sherlockian quiz, an auction and a raffle.

The first scheduled event on Friday’s agenda was the William Gillette Memorial Luncheon, held in an upper-floor hall at Connolly’s Pub & Restaurant. Mostly an opportunity to mingle, the luncheon also included a fun skit featuring Sherlock Holmes being called upon to solve a murder mystery at the restaurant. The players walked between the tables and occasionally interacted with the audience, giving it a truly immersive feel. The highlight, however, was that this was the first opportunity I had to converse meaningfully with so many of

the Sherlockians that I’d previously known only by name. “I know you!” was my repeated refrain that afternoon.

Between Friday’s events, the Riethmeiers and Reichs wandered around the city for more sightseeing, and we explored St. Patrick’s Cathedral, 30 Rockefeller Center, Times Square, and Central Park, amongst various clothing stores and chocolate sellers. Otto Penzler’s The Mysterious Bookshop is also open on Friday for Sherlockians to indulge — nay, *luxuriate* — in the bookseller’s wares. It is a little farther from the center of action than the rest of the BSI weekend events, but it was most certainly a memorable trip for me!

The main event was on Friday evening, when Baker Street Irregulars and guests attend the BSI Dinner (by invitation only), and all other Sherlockians and friends attend The Gaslight Gala (open to all).<sup>6</sup>



Photo: Ray Riethmeier

Attendees at both events received souvenir packets, which include gifts contributed by Sherlockian individuals and organizations from around the world. I have heard about these dinner packets for years, and I was eager to receive one for myself to finally see what sorts of things were included. Here’s a quick rundown of this year’s items for those who share my curiosity about these packets: a copy of the latest issue of Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine; a special

<sup>4</sup> “New York State of Mind” was the fourth track on Billy Joel’s 1976 album, *Turnstiles*. The song was not released as a single, but the album reached #122 on the Billboard 200 albums chart.

<sup>5</sup> “Jeopardy” was the first track on the Greg Kihn Band’s 1983 album, *Kihnsspiracy*. The single reached

#2 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. The song is perhaps best remembered today for “Weird Al” Yankovic’s 1984 parody, “I Lost On Jeopardy,” which itself reached #81 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

<sup>6</sup> The BSI Dinner was held at the Yale Club; the Gaslight Gala was held at Social Bar & Grill.

edition of *The Serpentine Muse* (by the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes); complimentary cards, bookmarks, and business cards from several notable Sherlockians; fliers for the Friends of Gillette Castle and The Beacon Society; a packet from the Sherlock Holmes Society of India (including a calendar and two teabags); a piece of chocolate formed in the shape of a coffin (provided by Marsha L. Pollak, ASH, BSI); two wooden nickels (provided by the Junior Sherlockian Society); and the obvious highlight of the packet: the latest *Norwegian Explorers Christmas Annual*.

Although I would opine that the venue for the Gaslight Gala was not optimal for conversation, it was still a fun evening of presentations, skits, and song, as well as delicious food. I also came home with a copy of Vincent Starrett's *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* that I won in the raffle.

Saturday began with the opening of the Merchants Room at the Roosevelt Hotel. Publishers, authors and collectors had tables set up to hawk their wares, and it is hard to leave such a setting without purchasing far more than you'd anticipated. After this, my wife and I attended the annual meeting of the Beacon Society, held just down the hall from the Merchants Room. The Beacon Society held particular appeal to my wife as an educator, since this organization endeavors to provide resources to teachers who utilize the Sherlock Holmes stories as part of their classroom curricula.<sup>7</sup>

After one more circuit through the Merchants Room, it was time to head off to the BSI Cocktail Reception, our final event before flying home on Saturday evening. Held in the same

venue as the BSI dinner the prior night, it was a great setting for conversation around the tables that filled the hall, with a delicious buffet meal and open bar. A high point of this event was when Peter Blau led an auction of rare memorabilia in his inimitable style.

The Reichs and Riethmeiers said our good-byes after the reception and thus missed the last two scheduled events,<sup>8</sup> because we then had to pack our bags (much heavier with books and other items acquired in NYC) and head

back to the airport for our evening flight. Once we checked out of the hotel, we still had a little time for more exploration. While the others went out for one last adventure, however, I decided to stay behind in the hotel lobby for the opportunity to enjoy a final conversation with a new friend I'd met at the luncheon on Friday.



Photo: Becky Riethmeier

day.

At the heart of the Sherlock Holmes stories is the friendship between Holmes and Watson, and there probably is no better recommendation for the BSI weekend than this: It provides a unique opportunity to make and foster new friendships that reflect those of the Great Detective and his stalwart companion. I look forward to renewing these friendships in the years to come. 🐾



Answers to the Personification Quiz on page 8. (Page numbers from Doubleday.):

1. GOLD, 609
2. THOR, 1068
3. SIGN, 101
4. FIVE, 218
5. SIGN, 106

<sup>7</sup> The Beacon Society strives to "Keep Green the Memory of the Master," through their Jan Stauber Grants, the Junior Sherlockian Society, and the Beacon Award. Sherlockians and educators are encouraged to visit their website ([www.beaconsociety.com](http://www.beaconsociety.com)) and sign up for their e-mail list.

<sup>8</sup> "The Very Irregular Lost in New York with a Bunch of Sherlockians" dinner was held on Saturday night, and the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes hosted an informal buffet brunch on Sunday morning.

## *Deerstalkers on the Subway: A First-timer's View of BSI Weekend*

BY LINDSAY HALL



WATCHED as two men walked down the platform in their deerstalker hats, capes, and pipes and boarded the train headed for the Brooklyn Bridge / City Hall station. None of the locals gave them a second look. Clearly, they'd seen stranger sights on the subway.

It's a moment I'll never forget from my first trip to BSI Weekend — a time when Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts converge on New York City to celebrate the great detective's birthday each year. The calendar features gala dinners, pub meetups, performances, and, if you want, plenty of chances to show off your period costume around town.

As a first-time attendee, I'd spent the last weeks of November carefully reading the menu of events and choosing a lineup that sounded fun. Later, in January, as my taxi pulled up in front of the Roosevelt Hotel at the start of the weekend, those choices would connect me with new friends from around the world.

That first morning, a group met in front of the hotel for the Christopher Morley Walk, a tour across town to a series of historic stops, led by Sherlockians Jim Cox and Doré Nash. From Grand Central Station, we traveled to Lower Manhattan for a group photo *inside* the famous Woolworth Building — a rare treat our guides arranged for the occasion — and Doré shared stories of working in the building the day of the September 11 attacks. Then, we walked next door to St. Paul's Chapel, and on to the Oculus in front of One World Trade Center. It was a moving moment; last time I'd stood on that spot, there was nothing but empty space and haunting memories.


The walk ended at McSorley's Old Ale House, one of New York's oldest saloons dating back to 1854, complete with sawdust-covered floor and a choice of two famous light and dark house ales. (As I figure the good Dr. Watson might have done, I took the opportunity to try one of each.) It was like going back in time to a place where sleuths and villains might have made mischief . . . and then making some of our own.

The next day, it was back to Tribeca for a peek inside Otto Penzler's Mysterious Bookshop, with its shelves lined floor to ceiling with mysteries and

crime novels, including an entire back wall dedicated to Sherlock Holmes and a basement that houses its rarest collectibles. I was in hard-boiled heaven, and it was a bit surreal buying a new book with essays by two of my new friends standing just a few feet away.

Later that night, I headed to the Social Bar in Midtown for the Gaslight Gala. Among the highlights: A toast to the Victorians' liberal medicinal use of brandy, sung to the tune of "Brandy (You're a Fine Girl)" by Looking Glass. There was an interactive performance of the "12 Days of Christmas" song with Holmes-themed lyrics subbed in. I was onstage for this, holding up the sign for Day 7, "Seven-Per-Cent Solution." And to end the night with a flourish, Norwegian Explorer Mike Miller served up his Groaner Quiz to an eager audience. Plenty of groans (and laughs) ensued.

These were just a few of the weekend's events, but what I'll remember most are the lovely in-between moments shared with new acquaintances. Like starting out the day hunting down a good cup of coffee with a friend from Denmark, and cracking jokes while getting lost in the pouring rain on the way to an event with a colleague from Boston.

And of course, watching those same two men from the subway, still fully costumed in their deerstalkers and capes, getting into their airport taxi on the last day of the weekend. The cab driver didn't bat an eye. Did I mention that I love New York? 



## *Baker Street West*

BY TOM GOTTWALT



WENTY-ONE Norwegian Explorers (and two grandchildren of Explorers) gathered on January 28, 2017, at Cooper Pub in St. Louis Park to celebrate the January birthday of the Master. President Tom Gottwalt greeted attendees as they arrived and served as emcee for the event. After dining and conversation, the program portion of the evening began.

Karen Ellery donated a Burger King Kids' Meal "Sherlock Gnomes" toy from the "Sherlock Gnomes" movie to be released March 23, 2018. It was designated a door prize and was given to the newest Norwegian Explorer, Mary Elizabeth Bezanson.


The group next heard reports from those that attended the New York City birthday events. First were reports from first-timers Lindsay Hall and Ray Riethmeier. Lindsay recounted her experiences and said it was a thrill to be part of so many activities and to hear from Sherlockians around the country about the high esteem in which they hold the Norwegian Explorers. Ray did a nice show-and-tell of the many contents in the “swag bag” received by the attendees at the Gaslight Gala. He also acknowledged high praise and appreciation from the group when it was noted that one of the most prized items in the bag and at the Baker Street Irregulars’ Annual Dinner was the *Norwegian Explorers Christmas Annual* which he edited. Norwegian Explorer, Mike Miller, was not in attendance but others noted that he had attended the NYC events and presented one of his famous “Groaner Quizzes” at the Gaslight Gala.

John Bergquist recounted the events at the Baker Street Irregulars’ Annual Dinner, noting the designation of “The Woman” and the BSI investitures, including our own Minnesota Norwegian Explorer and playwright, Jeffrey Hatcher. Tim Reich gave a recap of his activities as well and also noted that he investigated and sampled many New York craft beers during his trip.

Julie McKuras discussed her involvement writing and editing the current *Baker Street Journal’s Christmas Annual* with Sonia Fetherston and brought a copy with her to show to all. The title of the annual is “‘A Woman of Mystery’: Helene Yuhasova, Poetess Laureate of The Baker Street Irregulars” and Julie conducted some amazing research to flesh out details on this little-known woman who was involved with the Baker Street Irregulars in the 1940s.

Phil Bergem gave a general overview of non-Sherlockian activities to partake in New York (there are a few) to round out a weekend or extended stay.

Dick Sveum was last to report and brought with him numerous purchases of new books and other publications he had purchased in the dealers’ room, with which he did a short show-and-tell. He also talked about the Clients of Adrian Mulliner, a scion society for devotees of both John H. Watson and P.G. Wodehouse, which meets on the Saturday of the Birthday Weekend.

Tom Gottwalt thanked the speakers and then updated the group regarding upcoming Norwegian Explorers and other Sherlockian happenings including the next Study Group gatherings, the “Sherlock Gnomes” movie, a performance of the Red Throated League, two Sherlockian plays, and the August 2019 next triennial conference. 

## Study Group Session – “The Final Problem”

BY KAREN MURDOCK



IFTEEN Explorers met at the home of Soren Eversoll, in Saint Paul, to tour Soren’s “Sherlockian sitting room” and discuss “The Final Problem.” The meeting took place on a sunny Saturday afternoon, February 17, 2018. Mary Loving passed out black crepe paper armbands to commemorate the death of Sherlock Holmes. Mary Gallagher (Soren’s mom) passed out slices of cake, which was much appreciated.

In the “Show & Tell” section Steve Miller showed a book he bought recently, *Arthur Conan Doyle’s War* (about ACD’s service as a war correspondent in World War I). Karen Ellery passed around a “Sherlock Gnomes” figure she got at Burger King. Mary Loving showed a graphic novel of FINA, done by a Czech artist. Karen Murdock said she went to Highland Park High School one evening last month to see the thespian club put on five one-act plays, one of which (a detective spoof) was written and directed by Soren.

Karen M. passed around copies of her article “The Problem of ‘The Final Problem,’” which compared FINA to “The Problem Plays” of William Shakespeare (those not easily classified as Comedies, Tragedies, or Histories). She asked why Doyle felt compelled to bring Holmes back after his “death” at the Reichenbach Falls; he could have simply written Holmes tales that took place before Reichenbach, as *The Hound of the Baskervilles* did. Phil Bergem said this resurrection was due to pressure from the American magazine *Collier’s*. This magazine was willing to pay a lot of money for original Holmes tales but they wanted the tales to be contemporary, so Holmes had to be brought back from the dead.

Bob Brusich brought up the parallels between the death and resurrection of Holmes and the



death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Karen M. said she had once led a discussion of FINA on Holy Saturday (after the death, but before the resurrection), which seemed to her the most appropriate day of the year for such a discussion.

Karen E. said the question that bothers her more than any other in the Canon is this: Why did Holmes let Watson believe he was dead when, thanks to Sebastian Moran, all the criminals in London knew he was alive? Kristi Iverson said this was because Watson was not a good enough actor to keep this secret.

Karen E. said that when Holmes and Watson were both at the Reichenbach Falls and the Swiss messenger arrived, Holmes let Watson go back to the hotel (even though he was pretty sure that the summons was a fake). He did this to protect Watson so that Moriarty would not kill both of them.

Soren pointed out that Moriarty and Holmes do not hate one another. On the contrary, each admires the other; Holmes tells Watson, "I was forced to confess that I had at last met an antagonist who was my intellectual equal. My horror at his crimes was lost in my admiration at his skill." Steve M. said this reminded him of "Patton and Rommel."


Steve M. pointed out that, in the Canon, Moriarty, Mycroft and Irene Adler are not important characters, yet they loom large in pastiches and movies. Bob Schmall pointed out that "they have good agents." About the dynamic between heroes and villains, Steve M. said, "If you beat them every episode, how good can they be?" Steve Schier said this was like Flash Gordon and Ming the Merciless.

Kristi said other great mystery writers like Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham, and Dorothy Sayers all created criminal master organizations. Karen E. said that the French public admires great criminals.

Karen M. said that FINA is almost entirely lacking in the expected elements that comprise a typical Sherlock Holmes story. She passed around Ronald Knox's classic list of 11 typical parts of a Sherlock Holmes story (from "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes," 1912).

Karen E. said there is a long history of villains in literature falling; she wondered who the first "fallen villain" might have been. Steve M. guessed it was Simon the Magus from early Christian history. Bob B. guessed the Book of Revelation. Karen M. thought it might be the fall of the rebel angels

(How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!). Steve S. pointed out the "fall" of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis. Icarus in Greek mythology was also mentioned, although the group agreed that he was not a villain, just a boy who got overconfident.

Bob B. said that FINA was "Chapter 1 of a two-chapter novel." The sequel to Chapter One will be stunning. The next group discussion will be on Saturday, March 17 at Saint Anthony Park Library. The story under discussion will, of course, be EMPT. 

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(Editor's Desk – continued from page 1)

A major point of the trip was to view the August 21st solar eclipse. While unlikely that Holmes ever viewed an eclipse, there is a canonical mention. In *The Valley of Fear*, Inspector MacDonald said of a visit he had with Professor Moriarty: "I had a chat with him on eclipses. How the talk got that way I canna think; but he had out a reflector lantern and a globe, and made it all clear in a minute."

I wanted to spend a day in Laramie, Wyoming, to visit the Toppan Rare Book Collection housed at the American Heritage Center at the University. I had made arrangements with the curator, Anne Marie Lane, and she was a wonderful host (as I've found curators universally are). They have a copy of the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual* which I was able to see. It is hardbound in blue leather, without the covers or advertisements, but the remaining pages are in very good condition. The core of the rare books collection at the University of Wyoming consists of 4,000 books donated by Clara Toppan. She also contributed funds that continue to support the collection. One of the additional donated collections was that of her husband, Frederick W. Toppan. Of interest to us was that he had about a dozen or so quality Sherlockian books. These included first British editions of *The Return* and *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (including a note by Conan Doyle), The Norwegian Explorer's *Exploring Sherlock Holmes* (1957, McDiarmid), Starrett's *211B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*, and several other choice books. It was a thrill to see the Explorers' own book and tell Anne Marie of our connection. I also reflected on the relationship the Explorers have with the

Sherlock Holmes Collections at the U of M Andersen Library and the curators, Tim Johnson and Cheryll Fong.

A final semi-Sherlockian connection was seeing Mt. Holmes in Yellowstone National Park and Mt. Moran in Grand Teton National Park. While not actually named after our canonical characters, it was still a moment of connectedness. Sadly, Mt. Moran is taller, 12,605 ft. (3,842 m.) to Mt. Holmes's 10,336 ft. (3,150 m.) and more majestic. (But that's OK because they're mountains and not heroes and villains.)

There have been a number of additional Explorer and Sherlockian events that I have attended since our trip, many of which are covered in this issue. I hope you enjoy reading about what the Norwegian Explorers have been up to lately. 🐾

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*(Word from the President – continued from page 1)*

Dinner at which we will celebrate the 70th anniversary of our founding.

Under the leadership of Co-Chairs Julie McKuras and Gary Thaden, we've also begun planning for our next triennial conference co-sponsored with the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections and the University of Minnesota Libraries. Mark your calendars for August 9-11, 2019 for this event which is likely to be attended by Sherlockians from around the world.

A new animated movie, "Sherlock Gnomes" opens in theaters in March and we are blessed to have no less than two Sherlockian themed theater productions coming up this summer, both by playwright Ken Ludwig. "Postmortem" runs June 1-24 at Theatre in the Round and "Ken Ludwig's Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery" runs June 15 – August 5 at Park Square Theatre.

In short, it is a good time to be a Sherlockian and an even better time to be a Minnesota Sherlockian or a member of the Norwegian Explorers. Thank you for your membership and your continued interest in all things Sherlockian. 🐾

## Parting Words and Trifles



IX past articles or pamphlets written by Explorer Andrew Malec about Frederic Dorr Steele have been collected and translated into Chinese. Liu Zhen contacted Andrew who worked with him, and wrote a new introduction, to bring the articles to a new audience.

In the Fall issue of *Continuum*, the magazine of the University of Minnesota Libraries, they acknowledge donors to Sherlock Holmes Collections. It cheers my heart to see so many familiar names listed of wonderful people from Japan, Sweden, Canada, England and throughout the United States who support this fantastic institution.

There is a mission to Mars planned for 2020. It will have an ultraviolet Raman spectrometer named SHERLOC (Scanning Habitable Environments Raman and Luminescence for Organics and Chemicals) attached to the rover.

Each year the Twin Cities Antiquarian & Rare Book Fair is held in the Progress Center building at the State Fairgrounds. Recently it has been held the weekend before the Fourth of July, from 3 – 8 pm on Friday, 10 am – 4 pm on Saturday. A number of Explorers show up and it is a fun place for bibliophiles to congregate. The exact date for 2018 is yet to be announced.

Remember that the Red Throated League will perform at the Pavek Museum on Sunday, April 15th, starting at 4:00 pm.

Despite (or because of?) the infrequency of issues of *Explorations* over the past several years we have set a goal of producing three issues per year. These will be the Winter (February ±), Summer (June ±) and Fall issues (October ±). Accordingly, we are looking for content for the issues. The *Explorations* is a wonderful platform for expression of ideas and getting into print. Contact Phil (address below) for encouragement, guidance, support or details. 🐾

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### The Norwegian Explorers

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